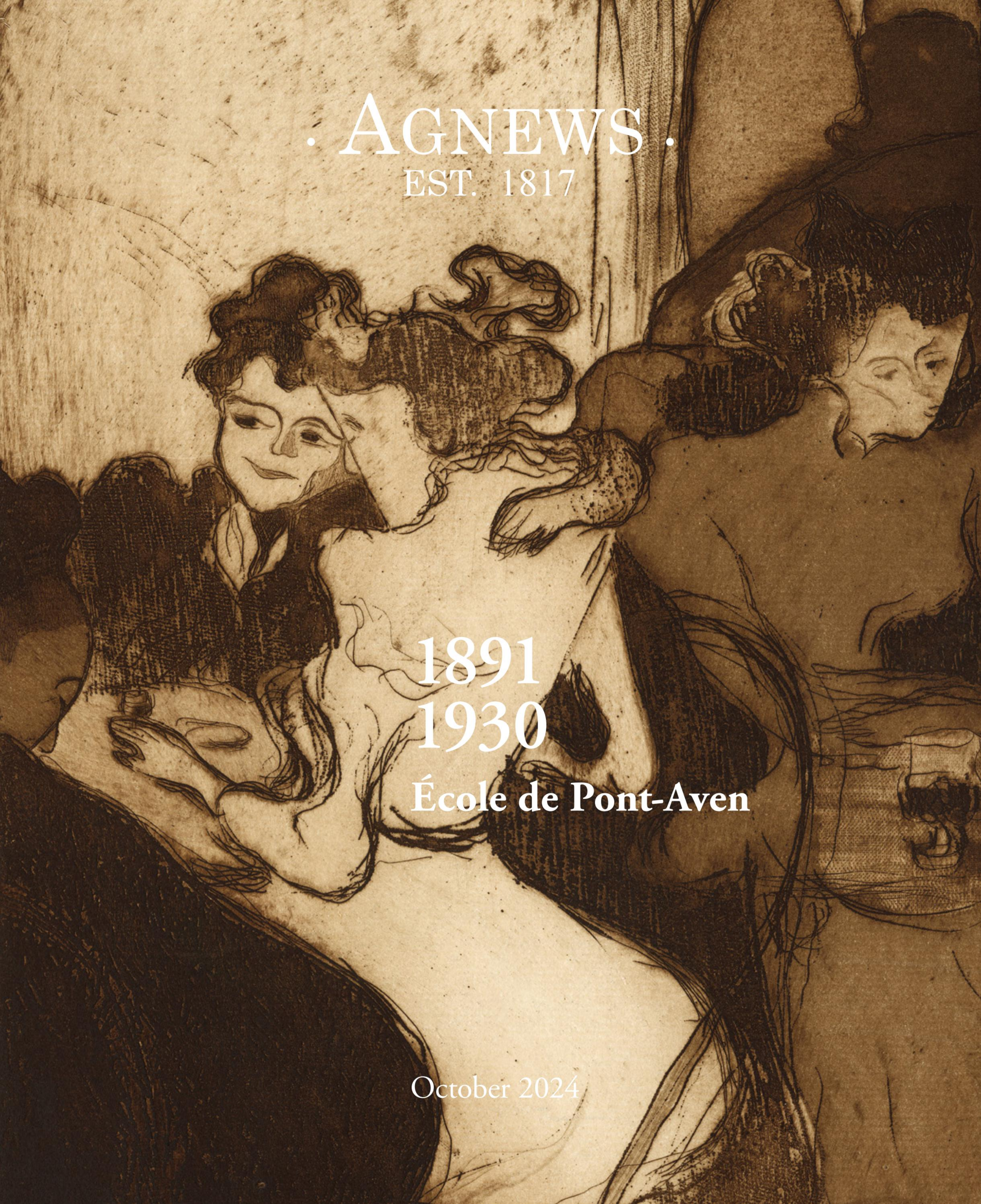




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École de Pont-Aven

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École de Pont-Aven

Though primarily praised for their groundbreaking oil paintings, the artists of the Pont-Aven School were also eager and adventurous printmakers. These artists were working in the wake of a revival, starting in the early 1890's, in the art of etching, which offered a corrective to those, troubled by the degraded processes of mass reproduction, who believed that prints were less artistically important than paintings. Including eighteen etchings and three drawings, this rare ensemble partly originates from the renowned Swiss collection of Sam Josefowitz (1921-2015), a long-time aficionado of the Pont-Aven School. In our collection one may find both the economy of means and the intense creative energy that defined the etching at this time in Brittany.

Miles away from the European cultural capitals, a brotherhood of French, British and Dutch artists lived together in the north of France, working in merged studio spaces and holding heated aesthetic debates at various inns and restaurants. Concentrating in Pont-Aven and Le Pouldu, these artists left behind a rich historical record of both their gatherings and their collaborative experiments in printmaking (fig. 1). If 1888 and 1889 were the years marking a break in the stormy friendship between Paul Gauguin (a regular guest at Pont-Aven since 1886) and Émile Bernard, they also gave us the first



Fig. 1 *Pont-Aven, peintres devant la Pension Gloanec, 1886, Coll. centre de ressources du Musée de Pont-Aven*

prints showing a clear debt to Synthetism. Up to 1895, the year of Gauguin's last stay in Finistère and of the group's dissolution, the artists of the Pont-Aven School worked to begin a new tradition of Breton etching. Among them, Armand Séguin was one of the most skilful in his handling of printing. Notably, he convinced Roderic O'Connor to try his hand in etching, and he did the same with Gauguin, who would later write the preface to Séguin's first solo show in 1895 (**cat. 13**).

A remote region which offered technical challenges for the printmaker, Brittany compelled these artists to re-evaluate their use of etching. Many of them preferred the thin and cheap quality of zinc plates, whose refined graininess brings a detailed finish, to lithographic stones. Driven by their interest in those coarse effects, Bernard and Gauguin exhibited their *zincographies* at the Café Volpini in Paris during the summer of 1889. The exhibition served as a kind of early manifesto, with both artists asserting their interest in synthesizing their impressions of nature with strong abstract forms. Borrowing from the language of popular prints, Bernard updated their hieratic peasant scenes to elaborate more experimental ones. In his almost square monotype *Head of a young Breton girl*, Bernard's coloured "vignette" finds itself enhanced with daring textured strokes (**cat. 6**). Comparing the works of these two artists, what strikes the eye is Bernard's pictorial emphasis on flat, darkly outlined areas, whereas Gauguin was more concerned with finding the tensions between two-dimensional decoration and figural modelling.

With their dual interest in printmaking and painting, Séguin and O'Connor used etching to compose abstract arrangements shaped by ornamental principles. Simplifying their compositions and structuring them according to formal rhythms, they managed to give aesthetic life to their experience of nature. While Séguin mastered the decorative aspect of the curved branches above the *Estuary* (**cat. 8**), the bushy foliage engraved by O'Connor in *The Orchard* (**cat. 14**) is suggested by a dense mass of rapid mark-making. Elsewhere, Maxime Maufra deftly wields the aquatint process to add half-tones and shades to his intaglio printing (**cat. 21**). Simulating the effects of ink-wash drawing, he finds pictorial potential in using aquatint to render chiaroscuro tones. Rejecting academic tradition in order to establish their independence, the etchers of the Pont-Aven School settled on a common ground: their collective taste for an assertive, materially expressive medium.

The artists of the Pont-Aven circle, some Breton by adoption, actively built their community into a readily identifiable entity. Paul Sérusier passed on the lessons of Gauguin's art and the ideas of the Nabis to many of the other artists in Brittany; Maufra similarly esteemed Gauguin in his own writings. In an 1893 piece for the monthly review *Les Essais d'art libre*, Maufra put Gauguin's name at the head of the Pont-Aven School, marking him as its dean



Fig. 2 Armand Séguin, *Evening*, 1894, The Art Institute of Chicago, etching edited by *L'Estampe Originale*, 2nd year, seventh delivery, July-September 1894, p. 74.

for posterity. Yet despite these hierarchies, these many artists were so socially and professionally close that it is often difficult to attribute some of their etchings. So it went with the remarkable *Woman with figs* (**cat. 19**), long thought of as a collaboration by both Gauguin and Séguin, but which we can now firmly attribute to Gauguin. Further, it's important to note that the production of etchings in Pont-Aven cannot be understood without an appreciation for the surrounding networks of printers, publishers and dealers, notably Eugène Delâtre, Édouard Ancourt and Paul Durand-Ruel, who often made these works materially possible.

That most of these graphic works were executed in Pont-Aven should not overshadow their connections with the wider French art market, whose beating heart belonged to Paris. The concept of the *belle épreuve*, certifying the uniqueness of the individual print, appeared at this time to support the valuation of these works. Between 1893 and 1895, the release of *L'Estampe Originale*, a periodical booklet edited by André Marty, included many etchings from the Pont-Aven School (fig. 2), disseminating their vision of modern etching. Though Gauguin and Bernard may have publicly disavowed fineness and preciousness as relevant aesthetic standards, their limited series of prints – some unique and hand-painted – have shown their work at the time to be fine and precious indeed. As shown in this catalogue, Pont-Aven was where Impressionist and Symbolist tendencies truly intermixed, in their etchings and drawings as well as their paintings.

Although the idea is now unpopular among academics, Gauguin's desire to achieve a kind of ideal, "pure" and authentic art in the natural landscape of Pont-Aven was shared by his fellow artists. Providing impressive contrasts between scalloped coasts, rural lands and mythical woods, the Breton countryside was wonderfully suited for this project. While Jan Verkade and Mögens Ballin were drawing with Sérusier during their stay in Huelgoat in 1891, Maufra undertook Impressionistic studies of the wavering coastal light. Indeed, the seascape prevailed in Maufra's art of the time. *The Wave* (**cat. 20**) is an outstanding example of his ability to both render atmospheric effects and balance shifting masses of form. Though he did not etch *en plein air*, O'Connor wielded a lively and biting dry-point in the studio to convey the dynamic modulations of a wind-swept landscape. In four of his etchings displayed here, the artist has translated his impression of misty volumes into abstract volutes (**cat. 16**). Thereby, O'Connor's manner comes close

to Séguin's decorative impulse, in whose work the line predominates, anticipating the strong arabesques and formal vocabulary of the Art Nouveau. Likewise, Séguin's clear stroke and his taste for distortion, noticeable in his bar scene (**cat. 3**), bear many similarities to the Nabi aesthetic. Like Gauguin and Vincent Van Gogh, among many others, Séguin's interests and obsessions extended beyond European visual culture to include the Japanese prints he hungrily sought out in Paris. His flattening of space and adoption of dramatic framing devices, which we find even in his etchings, can be attributed to the influence of well-known Japanese masters such as Andô Hiroshige and Katsushika Hokusai.

Just as these artists etched landscapes that were devoid of any signs of industrialisation, their portraits delineated an idealised Breton folk community. Projecting a naive image of people living in harmony with nature, the artists were especially moved by the local expressions of Breton Catholic faith, which was steeped in ancient pagan practices. In their contemplative portraits of two young, anonymous and traditionally costumed women (**cat. 5 & 7**), Robert Bevan and Jan Verkade instil a kind of ideal purity. Bernard explored Cloisonnism after studying the religious imagery of mediaeval stained glass and enamels, and many other artists underwent profoundly spiritual journeys which emerged from their time experimenting with etching in Brittany.

Constructing an aesthetic that confirmed their status among the avant-garde, the "*Peintres-Graveurs*" of the Pont-Aven School produced – in only a few years and in a small village that has been thoroughly mythologized – a rare and paradigmatic ensemble of graphic works. This catalogue is the story of printmakers who are best seen in the rough outer edges.



1 **Paul Gauguin** 1848 Paris – Atuona 1903

Portrait of Stéphane Mallarmé

Etching, drypoint and engraving printed in dark brownish-black ink on laid paper, 1891

Plate 183 × 143 mm

Reference Guérin 14; Mongan, Kornfeld & Joachim 12, second state A of four

Provenance Hotel Drouot, Paris, André Couturier and André Desvouses (expert Loys Delteil), 29 June 1916, lot 110 bis (“très belle épreuve sous verre selon le descriptif du catalogue”); David David-Weill, Paris; his sale Ader, Paris, 25-26 Mai 1971, lot 111; Henri Marie Petiet, Paris (Lugt 5031), his sale, Piasa, Paris, 30 September 1999, lot 60 (“très belle en rare épreuve du 1^{er} tirage sur vergé filigrané ARCHES limité à une douzaine d’épreuve tirées par Delâtre”), Sam Josefowitz, Pully (bought from the above sale), thence by descent

Condition In very good condition

This is a superb impression of the second state of four. Printed with selectively wiped tone by Eugène Delâtre for the artist himself, the work was shown by Gauguin to symbolist friends such as Charles Morice, Charles Filiger and Daniel de Monfreid. Only two proofs of the first state are known. About ten impressions of the second state are known, including the present sheet, which is recorded in the census by Elisabeth Mongan. Beside this small run of prints, all impressions of this work were made posthumously, after Gauguin’s death in 1913. Lifetime impressions of the work are thus exceedingly rare.

This portrait represents Gauguin’s only known attempt in etching. A preparatory sketch in graphite, formerly held in Vollard collection (Guérin 12), served as a study for the print. Here we find that Gauguin made a first abortive attempt – it is clearly crossed out – to portray Mallarmé head-on. On the same sheet Gauguin provides little sketches of a raven’s head and the head of a faun, alluding both to Mallarmé’s translation of Edgar Allen Poe’s famous poem *The Raven* and to Mallarmé’s own 1876 poem *L’Après-midi d’un faune*. In the print, Gauguin retains only the faun’s pointed ears, while the raven is moved so close to Mallarmé’s head that his beak practically rests on it. This intimate placement foregrounds Mallarmé as the man who introduced the proto-Symbolist poetry of Poe to France. Indeed, the

1875 appearance of Mallarmé’s translation of Poe was an event of great significance to French letters.

After being introduced to Mallarmé by a mutual friend, the writer Charles Morice, at the end of 1890, Gauguin attended Mallarmé’s weekly salon whenever he could. All of the important members of the Paris intelligentsia attended these renowned Tuesdays at Mallarmé’s house on rue de Rome. Gauguin was hoping to engineer a widespread publicity for his works, and Morice asked the help of his old friend Mallarmé. An aesthetic and even spiritual intimacy soon developed between Gauguin and the poet. This portrait, completed in early 1891 as Gauguin was preparing to leave Paris for his first visit to Tahiti, was born out the artist’s deep creative affinity for Mallarmé, and their friendship continued for many years despite Gauguin’s long absences abroad.

In his biography of Gauguin (1906), Jean de Rotonchamp relates how Gauguin, “not having the necessary equipment [for etching], asked the painter Léon Fauché, a fellow Volpini exhibitor, to help him: and Fauché provided everything he needed. Working from a simple sketch, Gauguin attacked the copperplate with great boldness. He used all the instruments – point, pen, burin, and scraper. Working feverishly, he reversed the image and sponged over it with whatever material he could lay his hands on.”



2 **Armand Séguin** 1869 Paris – Châteauneuf-du-Faou 1903 *Seated Woman with the Feathered Hat*

Etching and roulette on laid paper, ca. 1891-1892

With artist monogram AS printed in green

Plate 215 x 210 mm

Reference Field 6, 2nd (final) state

Exhibition *Armand Séguin 1869-1903*, exh. cat., Pont-Aven, Musée de Pont-Aven, 1989, p. 33 (ill.), no. 36 (this impression)

Provenance André Dunoyer de Segonzac, Paris (according to an inscription on the back); Ronan Taburet (Lugt 6158), Brest; thence by descent

Condition In fine condition

This etching is a very rare print by the young Nabis artist Armand Séguin. This composition, based on Parisian Nabis sources, can be dated to late 1891 or early 1892, before Séguin left Paris for Pont-Aven in the spring. Séguin had been introduced by Henri-Gabriel Ibels to the circle of Nabi artists as early as 1889; as Paul Sérusier wrote to Maurice Denis that year, “Pont-Aven. Jour de Venus 1889. J’ai reçu des nouvelles des deux nabis Séguin et Ibels. Ils ont mangé ensemble le repas mensuel après s’être vêtus de vêtements orientaux. Ils ont l’air assez content de leurs œuvres, surtout Séguin dont les paroles dénotent d’excellents principes”. During the winter of 1891-1892, Séguin worked in the Paris atelier of Ibels, on Rue Lepic, where he printed his *Portrait of Maurice Froment* (Field 5) as well as the present plate, *Seated Woman with the Feathered Hat*.

Seated Woman recalls several Nabis works shown in December 1891 in the first *Exposition des peintres Impressionnistes et Symbolistes*, at Le Barc de Bouteville. Séguin’s etching is remarkable for its expressive contours and line work, combined with its elaborate and sensitive use of patterning. A decorative and highly developed

image, *Seated Woman* also echoes Séguin’s marvelous *Delights of Life* panels, which are now in a private American collection (see *Pont-Aven*, 1989, p. 10).

Field records four impressions of the second state of this work, to which we can add four other examples, including the present sheet. These are all differently inked and wiped. All have the green stamp, except one that was formerly in the Pierre Fabius collection and is now in a Private collection in France. The present impression has been printed in black ink, an ink that seems richer than that found in MoMA’s version of the work, for instance. The Pierre Fabius sheet, which was also once owned by O’Conor, was rather paler. The impression at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France is so deeply inked that the patterns are highly obscured, and the composition is indeed nearly illegible except for the subject’s face and the hands. The only example of this work that is comparable in quality to our own sheet is that which was formerly in the Samuel Wagstaff collection, described by Field, and which was in the Josefowitz collection before that.



3 **Armand Séguin** 1869 Paris – Châteauneuf-du-Faou 1903 *The Bar*

Soft-ground etching and roulette printed on laid paper, 1893

Possible signed by the artist *A. Séguin 1893*; artist's monogram *AS* upper right printed in brown, and artist's monogram lower left *AS* printed in green

Plate 386 x 220 mm

Reference Field 22, undescribed first state of two

Exhibited *Gauguin & L'École de Pont-Aven*, exh. cat., Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, 1989, p. 82 , no. 78 (this impression)

Provenance Sam Josefowitz, Pully; thence by descent

Condition In fine condition

This piece is a wonderful impression, and likely the only impression, of this interesting composition's first state. Here we see the print before aquatint was applied, in later states, to the man's face and coat and to the dresses of the women seated at the table. In the final state, Séguin would darken the right arm of the woman facing us, and he would lighten the face and hair of the woman in the right-hand corner.

In this print, Séguin uses various etching techniques to achieve rich, painterly effects. Each character is conceived as a flat form, arranged one behind the other, creating a shallow space that surfaces right up to the picture plane. Séguin has carefully cleaned his plate so that the figures and isolated forms create ensembles that border on abstraction. Few of Séguin's

prints have anecdotal subjects such as we find here, and in his work it is usually difficult to detect signs of emotional content underneath his strong compositions. Here, however, the artist offers an ensemble that is both highly decorative and emotionally charged. The dark figures are vaguely threatening, and the ironic expressions on some of the women's faces open the work to several possible explanations. For the young Nabis and Pont-Aven artists, women like those represented here were the subjects of sketches, possible girlfriends, or short-term partners for ephemeral liaisons – but they generally didn't "inspire" the painters as muses or provoke overtly romantic feelings. Séguin had a girlfriend when he visited Pont-Aven in 1892, but to this day we are unable to say whether or not she served as a model for his prints.



4 **Armand Séguin** 1869 Paris – Châteauneuf-du-Faou 1903
The Bar

Soft-ground etching and roulette printed on laid paper, 1893

Artist's monogram lower left printed in green *AS*

Plate 393 x 232 mm

Reference Field 22, 2nd state of two

Provenance Private collection, Belgium

Condition In very good condition

This is a stunning impression of Séguin's *The Bar*. It is a very rare print; in his 1980 catalogue Richard Field mentions the existence of only a few impressions. The work's subject and its pattern-like composition recall Séguin's famous painted screen: *The Delight of Life*, ca. 1892-1893, which is now in a private collection. The composition of *The Bar* is characterized by flat planes of tone that abut and overlap one another to create wiry and convoluted lines of sight. These agitated curves, together with figure's caricatured features, are reminiscent of works by Toulouse-Lautrec,

who also tended to use the compositional device of large silhouettes set against backgrounds of contrasting value.

In general, few of Séguin's prints have strong narrative elements. Likewise, suggestions of emotional content underlying his bold formal experiments are very rare in his œuvre. Here, however, Séguin presents a highly decorative surface whose potent emotional atmosphere remains open to several possible interpretations.



5 Robert Polhill Bevan 1865 Hove – London 1925

Young Breton Girl

Charcoal on wove paper, ca. 1891

Stamped twice lower right with the monogram

Image 23 × 17.2 cm

Literature Nobert Lynton, *Home and Away*, in *The Guardian*, 25 May 1966 (ill.); Francis Stenlake, *From Cuckfield to Camden Town, The Story of artist Robert Bevan*, Cuckfield, 1999, p. 21 (ill.); Francis Stenlake, *Robert Bevan, From Gauguin to Camden Town*, London, 2008, p. 37 (ill.)

Exhibition London, Anthony d'Offay Gallery, *The English Friends of Paul Gauguin*, May-July 1967, no. 9
London, Royal Academy of Arts and Edinburgh, National Gallery of Scotland, *Gauguin and the School of Pont-Aven, Prints and Paintings*, Sept. 1989-February 1990, p. 155 (ill.)

Provenance Artist's studio; Robert Alexander Polhill Bevan; Anthony d'Offay Gallery, London (acquired from him before 1967); Sam Josefowitz, Pully (acquired on 27 March 1980); thence by descent.

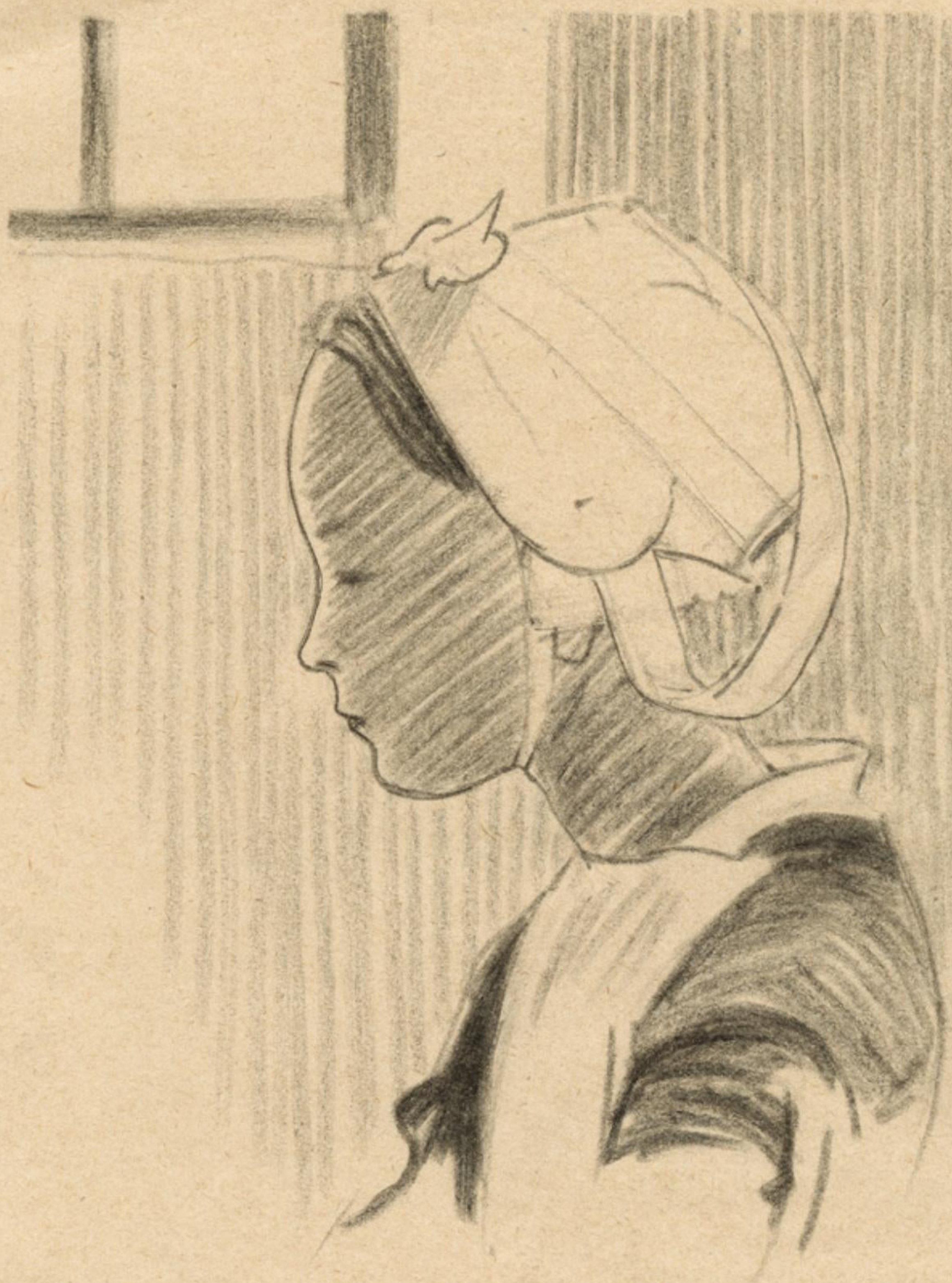
*Dear Mother. Thinking a short description of this place and the people may interest you I will do my best to describe it. [...] The costumes of the people are very jolly also, being the same they have worn for hundreds of years. The caps of the women, as I suppose you know, vary in every village [...]*¹

In this letter to his mother, dated September 1890, shortly after his arrival in Pont-Aven, Bevan relates his interest in the rural folkways of Brittany. Breton women in their traditional costume were a favourite subject for the artist at this time, of which the present profile of a young girl in charcoal is a notable example. The use of charcoal allowed Bevan to depict his model freely and quickly, giving the picture a vibrant energy. With lively mark-making the artist records all the subtleties of the young girl's fine features, and he suggests shadows with vigorous crosshatching, a technique later assimilated to his printmaking. In just a handful of lines he skilfully captures the details of her clothes, whose dark bands around the upper sleeves and flat, bonnet-shaped headdress are typical of the commune of Moëlan, which was not far from Pont-Aven. Two other portraits by Bevan – *Étude de femme bretonne agenouillée*, ca. 1891 (British Museum), and *Femme du Moëlan coupant du pain*, ca. 1894 (Musée de Pont-Aven) – show women of the town in similar dress.

Robert Polhill Bevan began his artistic training in 1888 at the Westminster School of Art under Fred Brown, a painter of rural subjects. He continued his studies at

the Académie Julian in Paris in 1890, where he met the artists of the Nabis. He discovered Brittany that same year, during a stay in Pont-Aven that lasted until 1891. During this first trip, the artist made numerous sketches in three notebooks, the last of which was mainly devoted to young Breton women with finely drawn faces, often shown sitting and reading. It's possible that the present work was a page from this last notebook. Bevan returned to Pont-Aven and stayed there from 1893 to 1894, when he met Gauguin at Le Pouldu, but the British artist settled mainly in Moëlan, which explains the presence of these costumes in almost all his works from the period. During his time in Brittany Bevan also developed an interest in printmaking, particularly lithography. The close and striking correspondence between this charcoal profile and the lithographed *Breton Girl*, a three-quarter view of a young woman from Moëlan with her headdress tied under her chin, underlines the persistence of this subject in Bevan's œuvre. Both women are seated in front of a window. By depicting the same subject with his lithography from a different angle, years later, it seems as if Bevan hoped to present the evolution of his abilities in handling an abiding fascination.

1. Francis Stenlake, *Robert Bevan, From Gauguin to Camden Town*, London, 2008, p. 20.



Young Boston Girl c 1891



6 **Emile Bernard** 1868 Lille – Paris 1941
Young Breton Girl

Monotype in colours on wove paper, 1892

Signed and dated lower left *Emile Bernard 92*

Plate 308 × 341 mm

Provenance Sam Josefowitz, Pully; thence by descent

Condition In very good condition

This work is one of only two monotypes recorded in Emile Bernard's oeuvre. The other, a different version of the same subject, is similarly signed in pencil in the lower left-hand corner, and it is of a similar size. It thus seems that this was the only subject with which Bernard tried his hand at monotyping, making this a highly significant work. (In this period in Pont-Aven, Gauguin was also experimenting with monotype, but with less success and colour. Gauguin would return to the monotype later in the 1890s, but with a different technique.)

Young Breton Girl is an immaculate example of the Synthetist movement, and we believe it to be among the best of all Bernard's works from this period. In the

summer of 1892, Bernard was in Pont-Aven, where he stayed until the beginning of 1893. He was helped in his decorative projects by a girl named Maria, but she does not seem to be the subject of this monotype. The face looks more like his sister Madeleine (the one with whom Gauguin was secretly in love) but it's nevertheless possible that the model was an anonymous girl from the village. In any case, in this period Bernard tended to synthesize multiple people into a single figure, creating generalized types rather than specific individuals. This process, which we find in only a short period of Bernard's oeuvre, reaches its apogee in the present work. Bernard's portraiture was quite different as recently as 1891, and his figurative style would again change dramatically by 1893-94.



7 **Jan Verkade** 1868 Zaandam – Beuron (Germany) 1946

Breton Girl in a Landscape
Marie Louise at Le Huelgoat

Pencil on wove paper, ca. 1891

Inscribed on the reverse of the support-sheet *Marie Louise. Le Huelgoat 91, Jan Verkade*

Sheet 36 x 26 cm

Provenance Mogens Ballin, Hellerup (Denmark); thence by descent

Condition In fine condition; a small, restored tear in the lower margin, and a small missing in the upper left margin

Once I got to know Gauguin, I came to see my mind as a principle that orders everything we see in nature. (Jan Verkade).

The present sheet is one of the most beautiful works we have ever seen from the œuvre of Jan Verkade. It was made in the spring of 1891, when Verkade travelled to Brittany, starting at Pont-Aven before proceeding in May to Le Huelgoat, sixty kilometres away. Le Huelgoat is a remarkable site, and it is quite different from Pont-Aven. At the beginning of Verkade's stay the town was in a festive mood, if we can trust this letter from Henry Sérusier, which mentions a local girl whose portrait Verkade would draw: "O, the dancing shepherd girls! And Marie, the beautiful virgin, Marie of Kervô [...] And the torchlight procession through the streets lit by the lanterns and candles at every windows. O, the strange procession: bagpipes, clarinet and drums, while the Dane [Balin], the Dutchman Verkade, and I bawl the Marseillaise." An inscription on its back seems to suggest that the present drawing is a sketch of the same Marie mentioned by Sérusier. Sérusier also wrote about Verkade to Maurice Denis: "Jan made enormous progress in his drawing and spiritualism. His portraits of peasant women are becoming Madonnas." This sheet is the most perfect example of an exceptional Synthetist approach, and its landscape is also reminiscent of drawings by Séguin and O'Connor.

After studying at the Amsterdam Academy of Fine Arts, where he first came into contact with the Impressionist movement, Verkade arrived in Paris in 1891. He was recommended to his colleague and compatriot Meyer de Haan, who received him most cordially and immediately began to tell him about his friend Gauguin, whom Verkade would soon meet. De Haan taught Verkade the rudiments of the new style and introduced him to Sérusier, who in turn introduced the young Dutchman to the Nabi painters. Verkade later wrote that Sérusier had a great artistic and religious influence on him: "Through Sérusier I also became a disciple of Gauguin and, as such, I was admitted to the circle of the Nabis". By the evidence of his work at the time, Jan Verkade was clearly influenced by the Synthetism of Gauguin and Émile Bernard, as well as by the groundbreaking still-lives of Paul Cézanne.

It was at this point that Verkade met Mogen Ballin, the first owner of this drawing, who would become a crucial friend and supporter. Between his first trip to Paris in 1891 and his 1895 ordination and departure for Beuron, Germany, Verkade's work exhibited aesthetic affinities with both the Breton group and the Nabis. During this period, he exhibited in Paris at the Indépendants, and his 1894 exhibition at the Bredgade in Copenhagen, organised by Ballin, was a resounding success. And it was at this height of renown and success that Verkade suddenly resolved to become a monk.



8 **Armand Séguin** 1869 Paris – Châteauneuf-du-Faou 1903
Trees Above the Estuary

Etching and aquatint on wove paper, ca. 1892

Plate 246 x 217 mm

Reference Field 11, only state

Literature *L'Aventure de Pont-Aven et Gauguin*, Exh. cat. Musée du Luxembourg, Paris, April-September 2003, p.294, no. 109 (another impression ill.)

Provenance Private collection, France; Artemis, London (2001); Sam Josefowitz, Pully (bought from the above); thence by descent.

This work is an extremely rare print. Field knew of only one impression, in the collection of Pierre Fabius, to which we can add the present sheet, which is printed on the same kind of paper. It is also one of the largest plates

in Séguin's œuvre. The estuary subject is certainly that of the Laïta, a confluence of two rivers near the village of Le Pouldu, where Séguin and the other artists of the Pont-Aven School stayed on many occasions.



9 **Armand Séguin** 1869 Paris – Châteauneuf-du-Faou 1903
The Billowing Trees

Etching, drypoint and soft-ground etching printed on laid paper, ca. 1893

Artist's monogram *AS* lower left printed in yellow, and artist's monogram *EAS* printed in gold

Watermark Arches

Plate 181 x 298 mm

Reference Field 14, only state (this impression cited "A")

Exhibited *Gauguin & L'École de Pont-Aven*, exh. cat., Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, 1989, p. 88 , no. 90 (this impression)

Provenance Samuel J. Wagstaff, New York; Sam Josefowitz, Pully; thence by descent

Condition In very good condition

This work is an outstanding impression of Armand Séguin's *The Billowing Trees*, printed on laid paper watermarked with an Arches logo. Also called *The Storm* because of its energetic and tensive mark-making, this composition again shows Séguin's inclination towards Synthetist formal strategies.

In this print, Séguin rapidly inscribes comma-like strokes to suggest masses of foliage. Thick outlines, recalling cloisonnist artworks from the same period, help to inscribe his forms as purely decorative elements on the composition's horizontal picture plane. Yet simultaneously, the trees also stand in discernable relief

among one another, suggesting spatial depth, each cluster of marks moving along its own supple, flowing lines. These seemingly contradictory characteristics – Séguin's decorative impulse and his palpable treatment of volume – is a feature common among works by the Pont-Aven school. The resulting visual tension prevents the works from being simply ornamental treatments of a surface. This etching shows us yet again Séguin's masterly technical range. Here, for instance, he uses drypoint at the bottom of the etching to produce the dark, rounded shapes that lead our eye upwards and inwards, towards the impressive trees in the center of the composition.



10 **Armand Séguin** 1869 Paris – Châteauneuf-du-Faou 1903
The Hurricane

Etching, drypoint and roulette on wove paper, ca. 1893

Dedicated in pencil lower right *à l'ami Maufra 94 AS*, with two overlaid artist's stamps monograms, a red ink one and a black ink one (lower right)

Plate 351 x 591 mm

Reference Field 14, only state

Exhibited *Gauguin & L'École de Pont-Aven*, exh. cat., Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, 1989, p. 89, no. 91 (this impression)

Provenance Maxime Maufra, Paris (given by the artist); Yves Maufra, France; Sam Josefowitz, Pully (bought from the above); thence by descent

Condition In good condition, some tears and accidents restored on the edges of the paper, a few touching the plate

This is the largest print by Armand Séguin, and certainly one of the most impressive ones. As far as we know, we record only four impressions, to which we can add the present one.

- The impression from the Roderic O'Connor sale (1956), bought by Pierre Fabius, sold to a Private collection, France (in March 2007)
- An impression from the Josefowitz collection, sold to the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (in January 2007)
- Two impressions in Private collections, France

In his 1980 catalogue of Séguin's prints, Richard Field records only one impression of this plate, but he wrote this before Samuel Josefowitz acquired his two impressions of the same composition. In fact, the catalogue of Séguin's Barc de Bouteville exhibition mentions a printing of ten impressions.

In the lower right-hand corner of the print there is an inscription that legibly reads "Camaret." Camaret-sur-Mer is a commune in the far west of Brittany where many Pont-Aven artists used to stay, and it was renowned for its strong Atlantic winds. Here Séguin

seems to depict the violence of the powerful storms that were typical of that region. The etching's trees, bending and swaying under the force of the wind, communicate a strong sense of the effects of such a hurricane. The little house buried in the vegetation seems crushed by the terrible forces of nature. Yet Séguin has carefully wiped the board to create a sense of light emerging through the clouds, which enlivens the whole scene. Séguin's use of a plate strewn with scratches, far from detracting from this engraving, helps to reinforce its dramatic and organic character.

This particular impression is a very fine example of the work, showing a dark and intense ink all over the plate. It was this impression that was exhibited in the major 1989 retrospective on the prints of Gauguin and the Pont-Aven school at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Its state of preservation is not perfect, but of the other four known impressions, three are in more or less the same condition. It is well known that Séguin was not very careful with his papers generally, but in this case the unusual size of the plate and the paper required for printing it certainly played a role in preventing its optimal conservation.



11 **Armand Séguin** 1869 Paris – Châteauneuf-du-Faou 1903
The Trees Beyond the Road at le Pouldu

Soft-ground etching and roulette printed on laid paper, 1893

With the green artist's stamp initials and the red artist's stamp initials (lower right)

Plate 219 x 351 mm

Reference Field 26, only state

Provenance Sam Josefowitz, Pully; thence by descent

Condition In very good condition

This is a fine, rich impression of a very rare print by Armand Séguin. Field recorded only two impressions of this plate, to which we can add four others, of which the present piece is one.



12 **Armand Séguin** 1869 Paris – Châteauneuf-du-Faou 1903
On the Riverbank in Brittany

Watercolour on sketch paper, ca. 1892-1894

Signed lower left *A.S.*

Sheet 200 x 265 mm

Provenance Paul Sérusier, Châteauneuf-du-Faou; Henriette Boutaric, Paris; Private collection, France

Condition Fine condition; with a full line of holes at the top, having been torn from a sketch book.

This is a superb and extremely rare landscape watercolour by Armand Seguin, made during his stay between Pouldu and Pont-Aven *circa* 1892-1894, and probably in the summer of 1894, when he was in this area with Paul Gauguin.

Seguin moved from Paris to Pont-Aven in spring 1892. That year, he met Émile Bernard and Auguste Renoir at the Hotel Julia in Pont-Aven; he also visited Maufra and Filiger at the inn of Marie Henry in Le Pouldu. There he composed the first landscapes of his œuvre, in painting and charcoal, but mostly in etching (there are seven examples in this medium recorded by Richard Field). This present composition could be dated to this year. Yet in the summer of 1894, Gauguin also appears to have twice depicted what seems to be the same place in Brittany, in a monotype (*Les Chaumières*, Field 27) and a painting (*The David Mill*, Wildenstein 528). Seguin and Gauguin spent much time together during this summer.

The present composition is remarkable for its strong contours and linear sensibility combined with its elaborate and delightful use of colour. Seguin's drawings are extremely rare; only one other landscape drawing from the same period, in pencil and charcoal, has been recorded.

It is worth mentioning this work's interesting provenance. The drawing, unrecorded in the literature, comes from the artist Paul Sérusier, whom Seguin met in 1892 in Brittany, probably at Marie Henry inn. In June 1903, overwhelmed by disease and poverty, Seguin was taken in by Sérusier at Châteauneuf-du-Faou, where he died in December of the same year. Henriette Boutaric was the best friend of Sérusier's wife, Marguerite. In 1950, upon Marguerite's death, Boutaric inherited the Sérusier atelier and its collection, whence the present sheet comes. Henriette spent the rest of her life promoting Sérusier's work, as well as that of the Nabi and other Pont-Aven artists, until her death in the 1980s.



13 **Armand Séguin** 1869 Paris – Châteauneuf-du-Faou 1903

Exposition d'œuvres nouvelles
Préface de Paul Gauguin

Cover and frontispiece with letterpress on light mauve Ingres paper and with large margin, 1895

Size 18 x 20 cm; in-12

Provenance Private collection, France

Condition In fine condition

The present object is an extremely rare catalogue of works by Séguin that were exhibited at Le Barc de Boutteville, in Paris. Commemorating Séguin's only exhibition put on during his life-time, the catalogue is also a key historical artifact that documents his complex relationship with Paul Gauguin. Indeed, the catalogue includes a preface by Gauguin, who writes in surprisingly reserved praise of the artist.

In Gauguin's defense, Séguin's exhibition included works made in a confusing mixture of styles. There were pieces from his years in Paris, which were more classically "Nabi," as well as later works more solidly aligned with the school of Pont-Aven. In his preface, Gauguin notes that his friend had not yet achieved his full potential, encouraging him to pursue the developments he made in his Breton studies. One detects a hint of competitiveness in Gauguin's hesitant appraisal of Séguin's art: "Séguin is not a master. His faults are not yet sufficiently clear-cut to merit him that title." Later Gauguin writes that "He is above all a cerebral artist [...] He expresses not what he sees but what he thinks through an original harmony of lines, through a curiously understood drawing of the arabesque", and "I would no doubt like the subject matter of all this to be more distinguished, less *je m'enfoutisme*." Gauguin continues: "On the other hand, the craft is too sensitive in the etchings; I would like there to be more ingenuity". For his part, Séguin claims to welcome this kind of honest criticism, stating at the head of his catalogue that "the desire to be judged by others and to learn [...] is the only legitimate reason for an exhibition".

We do not know the exact circumstances of the first meeting between Séguin and Gauguin. We do know for certain that they met in Brittany in early spring of

1894, and that Séguin had been already familiar with Gauguin's art. This fact has been indirectly confirmed by both artists – Gauguin in this 1895 preface, and Séguin in a 1903 description of the artists working at that time in Pont-Aven. Although Émile Bernard later asserted that it was in 1892 that they met, this is doubtful. The influence of Gauguin is unmistakable in Séguin's work of 1894 – we can cite *Evening* (Field 68), *Three Breton Women with Infants* (Field 70), the *Apparition*, and *Study of a Nude* (Field 77 and 78), and three decorative etchings, *A Summer's Day*, *Breton Women by the Sea*, and *Trees at Night* (Field 71-73) – yet this is not at all the case in his works of 1892 and 1893.

Séguin returned to Paris with Gauguin in November 1894. Perruchot reports that they were often together in the French capital during the early months of 1895, and Séguin's exhibition at Le Barc de Boutteville began in February. The catalogue lists seven paintings, thirteen drawings, and seventy-six prints. On the 18th of February, Gauguin placed many of his own works up for auction, and two were purchased by Séguin. It is also at this time that most specialists date *Woman with the Figs* (Field 80), yet we believe that the plate can be traced back to 1894. Likewise, the print's authorship, whether Séguin or Gauguin, has long been disputed, and though it may well have started out as a cooperative venture, we now know that Gauguin can be comfortably considered the sole artist of the work. Regardless, after Gauguin's departure for Tahiti in June 1895, the two artists never met again. Amazingly, around that same moment, Séguin seems to have been set adrift, both materially and artistically. He produced only a few paintings, fans, and book illustrations between Gauguin's 1895 departure and his own early death in 1903, at the age of 34.



Préface de Paul Gauguin

Exposition

D'ŒUVRES NOUVELLES

Armand Seguin

Février-Mars 1895

CHEZ LE BARC DE BOUTTEVILLE

47, RUE LE PELETIER, 47

14 **Roderic O’Conor** 1860 Milton – Nueil-sur-Layon 1940

The Orchard

Etching and drypoint on strong cream wove paper, 1893

Plate 257 x 330 mm

Reference Johnston 15, only state

Literature *The prints of the Pont Aven School: Gauguin and his circle in Brittany*, exh. cat., New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1986, no. 012, p. 126 (another impression ill.); *Gauguin & L’École de Pont-Aven*, exh. cat., Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, 1989, p. 114, no. 137 (another impression ill.)

Provenance Sotheby’s London, 17 June 1982 (“Important Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Prints”), lot 264; Sam Josefowitz, Pully (bought at the above sale); thence by descent

Condition In very good condition

This is one of the most beautiful landscapes in O’Conor’s œuvre. Impressions of the plate made during the artist’s lifetime are extremely rare. As far we can tell, the present work is one of only three impressions recorded by historians.



15 **Roderic O'Connor** 1860 Milton – Nueil-sur-Layon 1940

The Cliff

Etching and drypoint on wove paper, ca. 1893

With an inscription in ink on the back *gravures épreuves. Monsieur Georges Chaudet. 7, rue Rodier Paris. Envoi de M. O'Connor,*
with a post label *no. 9181 Nemours-Paris P.L.M.*, and in pencil *6 mars 1895*

Plate 248 × 390 mm

Reference Johnston 29, only state

Exhibition Pont-Aven, Musée de Pont-Aven, *Roderic O'Connor, l'œuvre gravé*, 20 March – 21 June 1999 (ill.); Quimper, Rennes et Nantes, Musée des Beaux-Arts, *L'École de Pont-Aven dans les collections publiques et privées de Bretagne*, 1978-1979, p. 73 (ill.)

Provenance Georges Chaudet, Paris; Sam Josefowitz, Pully; thence by descent

Condition In very good condition

This is a superb impression, including ample plate tone, on wove paper.



16 **Roderic O’Conor** 1860 Milton – Nueil-sur-Layon 1940

Landscape on the Coast

Etching and drypoint on laid paper, 1893

Atelier stamp lower right (Lugt 3911)

Plate 200 x 285 mm

Reference Johnston 10, only state

Literature *The prints of the Pont Aven School: Gauguin and his circle in Brittany*, Exh. cat., New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1986, no. 010, p. 125 (another impression ill.); *Gauguin & L’École de Pont-Aven*, Exh. cat., Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, 1989, p. 109, no. 128 (this impression)

Provenance Atelier O’Conor, Paris, Hotel Drouot, 7 February 1956, lot no. 15; Ronan Taburet (Lugt 6158), Brest

Condition In very good condition

This is a superb impression on laid paper.



17 **Roderic O’Conor** 1860 Milton – Nueil-sur-Layon 1940

Landscape

Etching and drypoint on laid paper, ca. 1893

Plate 200 x 230 mm

Reference Johnston 29, undescribed

Provenance Most probably the artist’s studio; his sale, Hotel Drouot, Bellier, Paris, 6-7 February 1956; André Breton, Paris; his sale, at Hotel Drouot, 17 April 2003, lot 4373; Private collection, England

Condition In very good condition

This superb impression on laid paper is the only recorded impression of this work.

It is worth mentioning an unexpected episode in the print’s provenance: it was once owned by André Breton. It turns out that the legendary surrealist poet acquired a dozen prints by Roderic O’Conor at the sale of his estate in 1956. One may naturally speculate on

why he bought them. Did he have a particular interest in O’Conor’s work, or in the School of Pont-Aven? Or was it simply the beauty of these proofs, full as they are of burs and ink?

Some of the prints were stamped “Atelier O’Conor.” Others, such as the present sheet, were not.



18 **Roderic O'Connor** 1860 Milton – Nueil-sur-Layon 1940

Breton Peasant Woman

Etching on laid paper, 1893

With lower right the stamp of the *Atelier O' Connor*, put in 1956

Plate 200 × 144 mm

Reference Johnston 28, only state

Literature *Gauguin & L'École de Pont-Aven*, Exh. cat., Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, 1989, p. 118, no. 144 (another impression ill.)

Provenance Artist's studio; his sale, Hotel Drouot, Bellier, Paris, 6-7 February 1956, lot no. 15 (1/29); Sam Josefowitz, Pully (bought at the above sale); thence by descent

Condition In very good condition

This is a superb impression, printed on laid paper. It is one of only four impressions of the work that historians have recorded.



19 **Paul Gauguin** 1848 Paris – Atuona 1903
The Woman with Figs

Etching printed in dark green on simili-Japan paper, 1894

Numbered in pencil lower right *no.24*

Plate 270 x 244 mm

Reference Guérin 88; Kornfeld 25, first state (c) of two (edition of 100, published in *Germinal* by Julius Meier-Graefe, Paris, 1899)

Provenance Private collection, USA

Condition In fine condition printed by Armand Séguin

This work is the result of a cooperative venture between Paul Gauguin and Armand Séguin. It is dated 1894, when the artists were settled and working together in Brittany. The design is clearly related to works Gauguin executed in the fall of 1894 – namely, his *Still Life with Flowers and Fruit* (Wildenstein 406); the monotype *The Angelus*, dedicated to O’Connor (Field 25); and the woodcut *Manau Tupapau* (2nd version, Kornfeld 29). All these compositions are marked by a series of rounded arcs that are characteristic of Gauguin’s work in 1894. In the present work, the blank form to the left of the seated woman seems to be specifically related to Gauguin’s decorative motifs in woodcuts like *Manau Tupapau* (1st version, Kornfeld 20) and *Te Faruru* (Kornfeld 15).

At the same time, one finds clear stylistic and technical echoes between this print and the work of Armand Séguin. The woman’s face, atypical for Gauguin, resembles the new, narrower features found in three prints by Séguin from 1894-95 (Field 80, 82 and 84). The drapery seems almost to have been drawn by Séguin – note its similarities to the isolated bit of cloth in Séguin’s *Primavera* drawing of late 1894, or even that found in his painting of 1892, *Breton Woman Gathering Nuts*. Yet in this work, there is a delicacy and

sensitivity to that shape that just feels a bit too refined to have come from Séguin. The printer Delâtre claimed that Gauguin drew the entire image in the presence of O’Connor, adding that Séguin’s role was limited to grounding and etching the plate. To be sure, in 1894 Gauguin was not an experienced etcher, and he enlisted Séguin’s help to produce the plate. Gauguin, perhaps in thanks for this help, writes at the top of the plate “Chez Séguin à St. Julien,” which was a little quarter of le Pouldu. It seems clear, then, that both Séguin and Gauguin participated in the making of this etching.

Whatever the circumstances of its creation, the etched plate remained in Séguin’s possession until 1899. When Julius Meier-Graefe started to look for prints for *Germinal*, a portfolio of works by his favorite artists, he could not reach Gauguin, who had returned to the South Sea in 1895. Thus, he got this plate from Séguin. According to O’Connor, the zinc had oxidised since its creation, and Séguin cleaned and retouched the plate before handing it over to Meier-Graefe. The latter gave the plate to Delâtre, who pulled the 100 impressions for *Germinal*. Although Meier-Graefe received the plate from Séguin, he claimed in the prospectus for the publication that Gauguin had sent one of his works from Tahiti.



20 **Maxime Maufra** 1861 Nantes – Poncé-sur-le-Loir 1918

The Wave

Etching and aquatint on laid paper, 1894

Signed lower right *Maufra*

Plate 348 × 540 mm

Watermark *Eugène Delâtre*

Reference Morane 10, between 3rd and 5th state of eight

Provenance Galerie Paul Prouté, *Catalogue Pont-Aven*, 1989, no. 159; Sam Josefowitz, Pully; thence by descent

Condition In very good condition

This is an exceptional impression of Maxime Maufra's most celebrated work, *The Wave*. The artist treated this print with a high degree of attention and care as he transformed its image over the course of eight successive states. This impression belongs to what Morane describes as "3^e, 4^e, 5^e état", after which Maufra would add no further distinctive elements but only a new coat of aquatint. This state shows powerful tonal contrasts, and the artist leaves parts of the composition white in order to illustrate the light reflecting on the waves. The subject is a raging sea seen from the shore of the Breton coast, where the Nabi artist spent much of his career as a printmaker.

If Maufra's approach to this composition seems characteristically Japanese, it is Hokusai that brings the association to mind. On the initiative of Samuel Bing, the author of *Japon Artistique* (1888-1891), an important exhibition of Japanese prints was held from 25 April to 22 May 1890 at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. This exhibition enthralled the art world, and artists such as Henri Rivière and Henri-Gustave Jossot took up the theme of Hokusai's *Wave* in the 4th and 6th volumes of *L'Estampe Originale* (1893 and 1894, respectively). In his own effort Maufra depicts the wave using only a few compartmentalised masses. In classic Synthetist fashion, his print seems to reveal the essential forms underpinning nature as Maufra saw it.



21 **Maxime Maufra** 1861 Nantes – Poncé-sur-le-Loir 1918
The Castle of Tonquédec

Etching and aquatint on wove paper, 1894

Signed and numbered in pencil lower right *Maufra no 1* (?)

Plate 297 x 353 mm

Reference Morane 17, 2nd (final) state

Provenance Jeffrey Kaplow, Paris

Condition In very fine condition

This is a very good impression of one of Maufra's most celebrated works, *The Castle of Tonquédec*, depicting the medieval *château-fort* in Brittany. The plate has been edited by *L'Estampe Originale*.



Wm. H. W. 1

22 **Robert Polhill Bevan** 1865 Hove (Brighton) – London 1925
Hawkridge

Lithograph on thin cream wove paper, 1898

Plate 350 x 405 mm

Reference Dry 23, only state

Literature *The prints of the Pont-Aven School: Gauguin and his circle in Brittany*, exh. cat., New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1987, p. 132, no. BV.2 (another impression illustrated)

Provenance Anthony d'Offay, London; Galerie Garton & Cooke, London; Sam Josefowitz, Pully (bought from the above); thence by descent

Condition In very good condition

The present work is a rare and beautiful print. Among Bevan's most famous compositions, it comes from an edition of only eighteen impressions.

One of the founding members of the Camden Town Group, Robert Polhill Bevan was a notable British painter and lithographer. The artist began his studies in 1888 Bevan at the Westminster School of Art before transferring to the Académie Julian in Paris. Amongst his fellow students at the Académie were Paul Sérusier, Pierre Bonnard, Édouard Vuillard and Maurice Denis. Bevan made his first visit to Brittany with fellow student Eric Forbes-Robertson in 1890, and he stayed at the Villa Julia in Pont-Aven. He made a second visit in the autumn of the following year before travelling to Morocco by way of Madrid to study works by Spanish masters such as Velázquez and Goya. Bevan returned to Brittany in 1893. In Pouldu he met Maxime Maufra, Charles Filiger, Sérusier, Roderic O'Connor and Armand Séguin. There is no evidence that he ever met Van Gogh, but it is obvious in the swirling trees and vibrant landscapes of his Breton drawings that he knew the Dutch modernist's work. It is known that

he was friendly with Paul Gauguin, who gave Bevan several prints. Bevan also received encouragement from Renoir, particularly for his drawings of horses. Although not evident in the few paintings that survive from this period, the influence of Point-Aven Synthetism is obvious in his drawings, early prints, and two surviving wax panels. He returned to England in 1894, settling in Hawkridge. It was at this time that he produced the original drawing for this composition. In 1898, after moving to Brighton, he had the drawing transferred to stone and printed eighteen impressions, one of which is the present example.

This composition is defined by strong forms, linear arabesques and a shallow treatment of space that is characteristic of Synthetist movement. Bevan's strokes here are shorter and more nervous than in his *Poplars* – done just before he left Brittany – so that each element of the composition seems to be highly animated. The sense of vibrant movement in this work recalls O'Connor's prints, and it is also reminiscent of certain works by Van Gogh.



23 **Carl Moser** 1873 - Bolzano - 1939
Breton Girl Seen From the Back

Woodcut on thin India paper, 1930
Signed and dated lower right *C. Moser 1930*
Image 242 × 202 mm
Reference Kirschl HS 112b
Provenance Private collection, Germany
Condition In pristine condition

The present work is a sublime proof of one of Carl Moser's most famous compositions, printed on a magnificent paper from India that captures all its subtle surface detail. Because the sheet used is so thin, the composition can be seen from both sides, verso and recto, which is one of the characteristics of woodcuts in this part of Asia.

Though less well known than many of his colleagues in Pont-Aven, Carl Moser made an essential contribution to the history of European wood engraving. Born in South Tyrol, Moser attended the Munich Academy of Fine Arts before moving to Paris in 1901, where he studied at the Académie Julien. It was there that he first

encountered the pictorial language of contemporary French painting and the Japanese art that was then so influential. In the summer of 1902, in the Breton town of Concarneau, he met the Viennese painter Max Kurzweil, who taught him woodcutting and printing techniques in the Japanese tradition. This meeting left a lasting impression on Moser, and Moser's successful synthesis of Eastern and Western visual modes gave his work a unique character. Even after his return to Bolzano in 1907, Moser continued to be thematically and aesthetically connected to Brittany. Though he soon introduced motifs from his homeland, the landscapes and local population of northern France remained an abiding influence on his work.



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